

The canal was opened as far as the outskirts of Montreal by August, 1824, and the first vessel passed through in 1825. The canal was a barge canal with five feet depth of water and locks 100 feet by 20 feet. The advisability of canal construction by Government instead of a private company is well shown in the history of the Welland canal, which was begun in 1824, and completed after much mismanagement and many difficulties, including the falling in of the Deep Cut, in 1829, but so poorly that much subsequent work was requisite.

We now approach the period when Quebec lost to Montreal the proud and lucrative position of the ocean port of Canada. This came about through the construction of the lake St. Peter channel, which is one of the most unique canals in the world. Its length is about eighteen miles, and it affords a depth of twenty-seven and a half feet, its submarine walls being sometimes sixteen feet deep, and ranging from one hundred to one hundred and fifty yards in width. The history of its construction is interesting. In 1826 the merchants of Montreal presented a petition that aid be granted in clearing the St. Lawrence at Ile Plat and in Lake St. Peter. The matter was referred to a committee of the Legislature, who examined pilots and ship captains, all of whom thought that any channel which might be dredged would be almost immediately refilled by the quicksands. In 1830 Capt. H. W. Bayfield surveyed the lake, and in his reports of 1831 and 1835 expressed the opinion that it was doubtful whether a channel for vessels of deep draught were possible. Montrealers, however, do not acknowledge that anything is impossible to them, and in 1838 the Committee of Trade again brought the matter forward and asked for a sixteen feet channel in place of the natural one of only eleven feet and a half. A new survey was ordered immediately after the Union of 1841, and the engineer, D. Thompson, declared a sixteen feet channel practicable. In that year the Legislature appropriated fifty-eight thousand five hundred pounds sterling towards the undertaking. The machinery and dredges required for the work were completed by 1843, and work was begun in the following year, a straight channel 150 feet wide and 14 feet deep being projected through the flats. This appears to have been an injudicious proceeding, as the currents drifted large quantities of sand into the excavations. Work was, however, continued until it was ascertained in 1845 that the appropriation would not be sufficient. A committee visited the work and decided that it would be better to abandon it and enlarge the natural but crooked channel, a proposal in which Capt. Bayfield concurred, only that he thought it more economical to complete the straight cut now that it had been so nearly finished. He advocated increasing the width to a hundred yards. The work was resumed, and discontinued in 1847 for want of funds, some seven miles out of nine having been dredged and seventy-one thousand pounds sterling having been expended.

Montreal would not accept its defeat. Its citizens kept up their agitation, and an act was passed in 1850 empowering the Harbor commissioners of the city to excavate a channel through the lake to a depth of sixteen feet, they being authorized to raise the necessary funds by a toll of not more than one shilling per ton on vessels drawing ten feet of water and upwards, and by borrowing thirty thousand pounds currency. The commissioners abandoned the straight cut and adopted the natural channel eleven and a half miles long, which by the following year they had dredged to a depth of thirteen feet, an increase of two feet, at low water. It was with pride and keen anticipation of a bright future that the people of Montreal in that

year watched the "City of Manchester" pass down the river en route for sea, drawing fourteen feet. In 1852 the commissioners were authorized to effect an additional loan of \$160,000, supplemented in 1855 by a further authorization for \$400,000. In 1852 the depth of the channel was 15 feet 2 inches at low water, and by the end of 1855 an additional foot had been gained, bringing the channel to the depth which had been contemplated. But ocean vessels had been growing larger, and the commissioners had determined not to stop there. In 1855 they had received authorization to excavate a twenty feet channel, and proceeded with the work with energy. In 1859 the Government advanced them \$60,000, on their plant. By 1860 a channel of seventeen and a quarter feet at low water had been reached, and the Harbor commissioners had contracted a debt of \$680,000, not including the \$60,000 due the Government. It is with some surprise that the writer notes a considerable difference in the statistics given by the Board of Trade and the Government on this subject. He has followed the Government report, although the Board of Trade declares that there was an eighteen feet channel by 1857. In 1860 the Government determined to reduce the toll imposed by the commissioners, and assumed the debt of \$680,000, an action confirmed by Act of Parliament in 1864. When the channel had been brought to the depth mentioned, it was decided to make it twenty feet, the Government consenting to wipe out the \$60,000 indebtedness and pay a further sum of \$160,000 on the completion of the works, leaving the plant, which they had loaned the commissioners, in the hands of the latter. The twenty feet canal was completed by the autumn of 1865. But again it was determined to deepen the channel, and by 1878 it had reached 22 feet 6 inches. A depth of twenty-five feet was reached in 1882, and by 1888 a great celebration was held in honor of the passage of a vessel drawing twenty-seven and a half feet from Montreal to Quebec, making Montreal by the energy of her citizens the most inland seaport of the world. In that year the Government took over the works.

Canadians are too familiar with the history of the "Royal William" for me to more than refer to it here. Let it suffice to say that this was the first bona fide ocean steamship to cross the Atlantic, that she was built at Quebec, engined at Montreal, and performed her memorable voyage in 1833, sailing from Pictou on 18th August and arriving at Gravesend, seventeen days later. She was subsequently sold to the Spanish Government. The first company to run a regular line of steamers between Montreal and Great Britain was chartered in 1853, being granted a subsidy of \$19,000 per annum by Government to carry a fortnightly mail. It also received \$4,000 from the St. Lawrence & Atlantic Railway and \$1,000 from Portland, which city it made a port of call. On 10th May of that year the "Geneva," 350 tons, arrived in port, the pioneer of Montreal's ocean steamships, if we except the "Royal William." The "Geneva" was followed by the "Lady Eglinton" and the "Sarah Sands." The Canadian Steam Navigation Company did not, however, succeed, and was replaced as a mail carrier in 1856 by the Allan Line.

This famous Canadian line was founded by Captain Alexander Allan, of Saltcoats in Ayrshire, whose ship "Jane" carried stores to the Duke of Wellington in the Peninsula in 1815, and shortly after the peace began running between Montreal and the Clyde. His business prospered, and packet after packet was added to his fleet. When the deepening of the channel to Quebec had been partly accomplished, the Allans began to build steam vessels, the